

Wind energy company powering skills development work

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South Africa is thankfully moving towards cleaner energy with Cabinet's latest approved 2019 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). This IRP outlines wind power contribution to the future energy mix of 18%. South Africa has therefore seen the swift appearance of larger and smaller wind and solar farms during the past few years, and this also triggers discussions about how the growing renewable energy programme contributes to sustainability and the development of new skills for the country.



Many international and local companies have joined forces together with professional bodies to shape our wind power industry, and their work reaches beyond energy; they make important contributions to skills and enterprise and supplier development.



Jill Johnson, Senior Executive at SAICA Enterprise Development (SAICA ED)

A company that supports the development of small businesses within the energy sector is Cennergi (Pty) Ltd. Their Tsitsikamma Community Windfarm and their Amakhala Emoyeni Windfarm project include two enterprises in Wittekleibosch and two enterprises in Bedford and Cookhouse, Eastern Cape, respectively, as part of SAICA Enterprise Development's Supplier Development programme (SDP) that operates in partnership with Cennergi (Pty)Ltd. The four small enterprises, namely Masibambane, Sikhulisana, Khanyani Basadi and Mankol Ventures, are suppliers to the windfarm projects.

"We are very proud of this 12-month programme," says Jill Johnson, Senior Executive at SAICA Enterprise Development (SAICA ED). "Its aim is to provide tools and knowledge, as well as coaching and mentorship support to ensure that business and computer literacy skills are being transferred to small business owners to advance the sustainability and longevity of their businesses."

The Tsitsikamma and Amakhala Emoyeni Windfarms' primary areas of community economic development "include the communities and towns located within a 50 km radius from the windfarm, with interventions including SMME training and support. We focus on three main areas within the entrepreneurial developmental framework: leadership development, business skills mastery and financial excellence," she explains.

"In terms of leadership development, we aim to assist participants on their journey to becoming emotionally intelligent business owners. In addition, through the SAICA ED Supplier Development Programme, we assist owners to gain the necessary business acumen to create a supplier-ready enterprise and accumulate a greater understanding of the role of finance in their businesses."

Simphele Mbenya, Economic Development Officer at Cennergi, says, "It is envisaged that the opportunity given to these beneficiaries will enable them to learn, improve, sustain and grow their businesses so that they extract maximum opportunities from the renewable energy sector and beyond. Amakhala Emoyeni Windfarm is a caring, compassionate company which has the development of human beings and communities at the heart of its operations."

Sindiswa Speelman, also an Economic Development Officer at Cennergi, says, "The Tsitsikamma Community Wind Farm is delighted to have been part of this Supplier Development Programme which seeks to promote economic growth and reduce poverty within our local communities. We believe that the skills obtained during the course of the programme will enhance the businesses operations and equip them to confidently compete in national and even international markets."

As the service provider ensuring end-to-end implementation and management of the SDP, SAICA ED already sees its effects of the initiative in making a difference for the relevant businesses in the Eastern Cape. Zelia Brown, the SAICA ED project manager for the programme, is excited about its effects, judging from the reactions of participants. "Our enthusiasm is fuelled by the knowledge that our applicable and relevant interventions ensure the success of a project that supports the growth of a well-qualified small and medium-sized business sector in the country," she comments.

The insights of participating entrepreneurs illustrate the importance of programmes such as this one. "I enjoyed the training because it assists me and teaches me about business: how to behave in business," says Linda Zako, a Masibambane director.

Mphakamisi Dano, also a director from Masibambane, a supplier to the Amakhala Emoyeni Windfarm, adds that the training showed me the importance of compliance, while Khanyani Basadi, a supplier to the Tsitsikamma Community Windfarm, director Asanda Heshu points out that "I learned how to calculate profit, how to cost my products, how to complete tender documents, and how to create a sound business plan." Asanda adds that "this training really helped me learn how to run a business."

The Cennergi/SAICA ED Supplier Development initiative is indeed an example of positive, sustainable energy in more than one sense of the word – especially for the entrepreneurs in the Eastern Cape who benefit from it.

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